

An exploration of Indonesian EFL learners' unwillingness to communicate

by Sukardi Weda

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Sukardi Weda – Andi Elsa Fadhilah Sakti – Andi Riola Pasenrigading

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Abstract

This study aimed at exploring EFL students' unwillingness to communicate (UTS) of English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom at higher institution in Indonesia. A 25-item survey of 70 students of English study program at graduate program State University of Makassar Indonesia stated that most of the students were willing to participating in group discussions and they revealed that their friends listened to their ideas and suggestions. The study also reported that the majority of participants disagreed to the statements: talking to friends is just a waste of time, they don't talk in classroom presentation because they are shy, they don't like to get involved in group discussions, their friends don't listen to their ideas and suggestions in classroom discussions, they don't ask for advice from friends when they have to make decisions, they are afraid to express themselves in a group, and they find it difficult to make conversation with their mates. The students were unwillingness to express ideas to other students because they felt nervous, and they also were unwillingness to express themselves because they had some fears.

Key words: Unwillingness to communicate (UTC), EFL learners, Indonesia

Introduction

One of the main goals of learning and teaching process in the classroom setting is to enhance students' involvement and participation in the classroom discussion. Some students are enthusiastic to express their ideas and feelings in the classroom discussion while others are unwillingness to communicate. They are unwillingness to communicate because some factors, such as they are anxious and shy, they are not confident, they do not have enough vocabulary, they are not used to expressing opinions in group discussions, and many other linguistic, social, and psychological factors. Group discussion is the best way to toil students' participation in the classroom and through group discussion, communication practices in foreign language and second language classroom exist. Group discussions prepare rich information to be examined in terms of the willingness and unwillingness of students to communicate.

One of the goals of communication research is to predict communication outcomes based upon the identification of human variables that affect the communication setting or system (Burgoon, Burgoon, 1974, p. 31). Sociological and psychological variables have been valuable in communication research to identify predispositions for actual communication behaviors (Burgoon, 1976, p. 60). Burgoon therefore adds that there are a number of these variables point to the existence of a global communication construct that may conveniently be labeled unwillingness to communicate and this predisposition represents a chronic tendency to avoid and/or devalue oral communication.

Unwillingness to communicate is a predisposition representing a chronic tendency to avoid and/ or devalue oral communication (Pearson et al., 2003, p. 219). Burgoon (1976) as cited in Liu and Jackson (2008, p. 71) argued that "individuals with communication reticence exhibit the predisposition of unwillingness to communicate," which stems from a variety of causes, such as apprehension, low self-esteem, lack of communicative competence, anomie, alienation, and introversion.

Willingness and unwillingness to communicate in a foreign language (FL) or a second language (L2) classroom have become interesting issues for foreign and second language learning and teaching (Macintyre, 2007; Ningsih et al, 2018; Khany, Nejad, 2016; Liu, Jackson, 2008; Fukuta, 2017; Riasati, 2012; Peng, 2012; Peng, 2013; Barjesteh et al., 2012; Nazari, Allahyar, 2012; Macintyre et al., 2011; Zarrinabadi, Abdi, 2011; Mirsane, Khabiri, 2016; Oz, 2014; & Fu et al, 2012).

Therefore, the present study sets the research questions as follows:

RQ1: What are the factors affecting students' unwillingness to communicate in the EFL group discussion at higher institution?

RQ2: Why are the students unwilling to participate in the EFL group discussion?

Review of Literature

In contrast to willingness to communicate (WTC), the concept of unwillingness to communicate (UTC) emerged in the field of second or foreign language acquisition (Khany, Nejad, 2016, p. 3). Along history of research has established the importance of communication apprehension as a communication variable (Burgoon, 1977, p. 122). Unwillingness induces classroom silence, which is an obstacle to acquiring the target language in a classroom, and results from avoidance of communication (Harumi as cit² in Fukuta, 2017, p. 2). McCroskey (1977) as cited in Kelly (1982, p. 99) reported that reticence is the most global construct, that unwillingness to communicate is essentially similar to reticence, that communication apprehension is subsumed by reticence and unwillingness to communicate, and that shyness is basically the same as communication apprehension. According to Burgoon (1976) as cited in Pearson et al. (2011, p. 219), unwi³gness to communicate is a predisposition representing a chronic tendency to avoid and/ or devalue oral communication. Burgoon in Pearson et al (2011) therefore said that unwillingness to communicate focuses on two dimensions, perceived rewards for communicating and the perceived consequences of approaching or a²²ing communication encounters. The Table 1 below shows the measurement of second language (L2) or foreign language (FL) on unwillingness to communicate (UTC) from some scholars or language practitioners.

Table 1. The measurement of L2 or FL UTC in previous studies

Researcher	Research Site & Year	Instrument	Subjects/Participants
Sri Kusuma Ningsih, Stephanie Narahara & Herri Mulyono	Indonesia, 2018	Online questionnaire was distributed to the students via school Facebook pages and Twitter.	A total of 158 students volunteered to participate, of which 122 were female, and 36 were male
Reza Khany and Ali Mansouri Nejad	Iran, 2016	A total of 20 items developed by Burgoon (1976) measured the participants' UWTC. The scale was adapted to the present study to measure L2UWTC with respect to both psychological and ³ ciological factors.	217 undergraduate students majoring in English Language and Literature at Ilam University
Amandeep Dhir, Sufen Chen, & Marko	India, 2015	A 78-item pool was utilized for examining different UBGs among	1914 adolescent internet users.

Nieminen			adolescent internet users.	12	
Pavica Sheldon	USA, 2008		A 20-item unwillingness-to-communicate scale (Burgoon, 1976).		172 students
Judee Burgoon	K. USA, 1976		Self-report responses to the Personal Report of Communication Anxiety-College and the Unwillingness-to-Communicate Scale		222 students
Judee Burgoon and Michael Burgoon	K. USA, 1974		A new 26-item scale to measure a construct labeled unwillingness to communicate		283 students at West Virginia University
Judee Burgoon	K. USA, 1977		The 20-item Likert-type Unwillingness-to-Communicate Scale		152 students
Theodore Avtgis	A. USA, 1999		Participants completed the Burgoon (1976) Unwillingness to Communicate Scale and the Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990) Revised Family Communication Patterns Instrument		200 working adults (105 males and 95 females)
Joo Young Jang and Yong-Chan Kim	South Korea, 2012		A questionnaire		425 elementary school students
Nathan Miczo	USA, 2004		A survey including the following scales: Unwillingness to Communicate, Humor Orientation, Coping Humor, revised UCLA Loneliness, and Perceived Stress.	4	202 undergraduate students enrolled in communication courses at a Midwestern university
Judy Pearson, Jeffrey T. Child, Becky L. DeGreeff, Julie L. Semlak & Ann Burnett	C. USA, 2011		Twenty 7-point Likert-type items developed by Burgoon (1976)		655 participants were used for this research, 378 from a midsized upper Midwestern university and 277 from a large Midwestern university
Lynne Kelly	USA, 1982		A 74-item questionnaire consisting of the items from scales designed to assess shyness, communication	14	458 students at Pennsylvania State University.

		apprehension, reticence, and unwillingness to communicate.	
Louis Leung	Hongkong, 2007	A questionnaire	532 college students
Miranda Lai-ye Ma & Louis Leung	Hongkong, 2006	A-20 item Unwillingness-to-communicate scale (Burgoon, 1976).	591 internet users
Junya Fukuta	Japan, 2017	A 7-point self-rating scale of the questionnaire (including speaking, reading, writing, listening, grammar, and vocabulary) ranging from 0 (introductory) to 6 (advanced).	Thirty-three first year students (male: n = 7, female: n = 26) majoring in arts or design in a Japanese university participated in this study
Meihua Liu & Jane Jackson	China, 2008	A 70-item survey of Unwillingness to Communicate Scale (UCS) developed by Burgoon (1976), and the Language Class Risk-Taking (LCR) and Language Class Sociability (LCS) scales designed by Ely (1986) to rate unwillingness to communicate. They also completed the FLCAS developed by Horwitz et al. (1986).	547 participants (430 male and 117 female) who were first year non-English majors at Tsinghua University

Method

Participants

The unwillingness to communicate (UTS) scale was completed by 70 graduate students (male = 19 or 27.14% and female = 51 or 72.86%) major in English education study program State University of Makassar, Indonesia. The participants were in the first semester enrolled in Educational Psychology course and Entrepreneurship course in 2019/2020 academic year. The participants' age ranging from 22 – 40, there were 52 or 74.29% of 22 – 25 years old, 12 or 17.14% of 26 – 30 years old, and 6 or 8.56% of 31 – 40 years old.

Instrument & Procedure

The independent measure was questionnaire which aimed to explore unwillingness to communicate, measured by the 25-item Likert-type Unwillingness to Communicate Scale adapted from Burgoon (1976). The questionnaire was written in English and the undergraduate English language students were asked to rate their perception on UTC in EFL classroom. In this present research, the students were asked to rate their perceptions with response to the questionnaires on a 3-point Likert scale on which 1 =

agree, 2 = uncertain, and 3 = disagree. The students completed the survey in approximately 10 minutes at the beginning of a lecture.

Result and Discussion

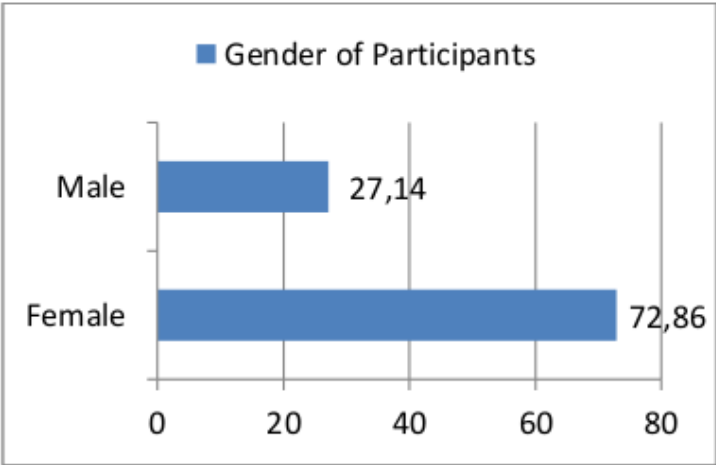


Figure 1. Gender of Participants

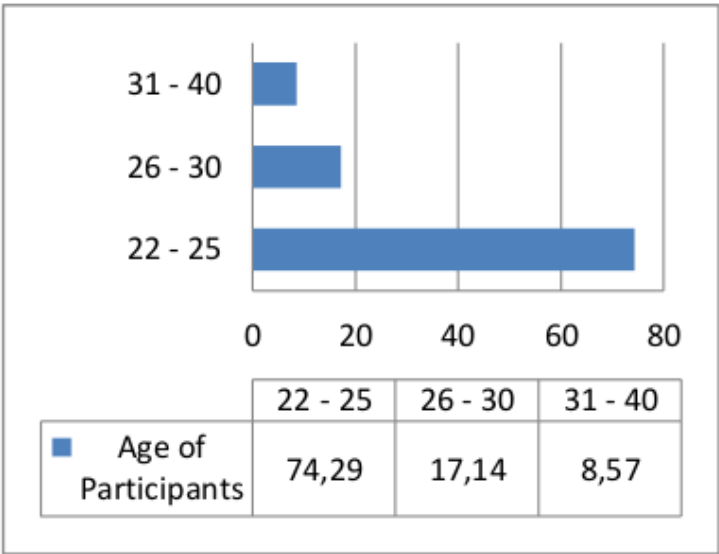


Figure 2. Age of Participants

10criptive Statistics

To reveal the general tendency of students' unwillingness to communicate required the determination of the mean, standard deviation, maximum, minimum, skewness, and kurtosis of the Unwillingness to Communicate Scale (UCS). Descriptive statistics (min, max, mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis for EFL students' reluctance to communicate scale are shown in Table 2. As seen in Table 2, participants' responses ranged in three points on the scale. The results of the study reveal that the participants achieved a mean of 2.4714 and SD = .65323 for student's perception number 1 (I'm afraid to speak up in classroom discussions). The participants achieved a mean of 2.6143 and SD = .57213 for student's perception number 2 (I don't talk in classroom presentation because I'm shy). The students achieved a mean of 1.8143 and SD = .66579 for student's perception number 3 (I talk

a lot because I am not shy). The students achieved a mean of 2.5714 and SD = .64989 for student's perception number 4 (I don't like to get involved in group discussions). The students achieved a mean of 1.9714 and SD = .74155 for students' perception number 5 (In group discussions, I prefer to listen rather than talk). The means and SD for students' perception number 6 to number 25 are clearly presented on Table 2. The normal distribution can be observed for all scales in this current study as illustrated by skewness and kurtosis value as presented in Table 3. The item's skewness and kurtosis values are mostly in the range -1 and +1. Univariate normality is considered to be supported according to the ± 2 threshold for the slope and kurtosis suggested by Kunnan (1998) in Peng (2013).

Table 2. Distributions for EFL Unwillingness to Communicate (N = 70)

Item	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
1	1.00	3.00	2.4714	.65323	-.855	-.321
2	1.00	3.00	2.6143	.57213	-1.183	.463
3	1.00	3.00	1.8143	.66579	.227	-.727
4	1.00	3.00	2.5714	.64989	-1.251	.415
5	1.00	3.00	1.9714	.74155	.046	-1.150
6	1.00	3.00	2.0857	.82958	-.163	-1.531
7	1.00	3.00	2.1571	.79191	-.291	-1.341
8	1.00	3.00	2.4429	.69440	-.859	-.462
9	1.00	3.00	1.3857	.57213	1.183	.463
10	1.00	3.00	1.9143	.67551	.104	-.755
11	1.00	3.00	2.4571	.67428	-.862	-.382
12	1.00	3.00	1.6143	.76694	.793	-.840
13	1.00	3.00	1.4714	.60724	.912	-.133
14	1.00	3.00	1.6714	.75607	.634	-.969
15	1.00	3.00	2.2286	.68464	-.326	-.826
16	1.00	3.00	2.5714	.52672	-.600	-.985
17	1.00	3.00	2.5000	.65386	-.961	-.162
18	1.00	3.00	1.6571	.56172	.102	-.699
19	1.00	3.00	2.4571	.60638	-.634	-.508
20	1.00	3.00	1.3714	.54298	1.095	.208
21	1.00	3.00	1.5429	.60638	.634	-.508
22	1.00	3.00	2.3571	.72303	-.665	-.803
23	1.00	3.00	2.7429	.60638	-2.224	3.582
24	1.00	3.00	2.3571	.68176	-.591	-.702
25	1.00	3.00	2.1714	.72174	-.271	-1.021

Cronbach's Alpha .588

Table 3: Percentages of Students' Perception on Unwillingness to Communicate

Item	Students' Perception	Agree (%)	Uncertain (%)	Disagree (%)
1	I'm afraid to speak up in classroom discussions.	8.6	35.7	55.7
2	I don't talk in classroom discussion because I'm shy.	4.3	30.0	65.7
3	I talk a lot because I am not shy.	32.9	52.9	14.3
4	I don't like to get involved in group discussions.	8.6	25.7	65.7
5	In group discussions, I prefer to listen rather than talk.	28.6	45.7	25.7
6	I feel nervous when I have to express ideas to others.	30.0	31.4	38.6
7	I have some fears about expressing myself in a group discussion.	24.3	35.7	40.0
8	I am afraid to express myself in a group discussion.	11.4	32.9	55.7
9	I like group discussions.	65.7	30.0	4.3
10	During a group discussion, I prefer to talk rather than listen.	27.1	54.3	18.6
11	I find it difficult to make conversation with my mates.	10.0	34.3	55.7
12	I am not afraid to talk in a classroom discussion.	55.7	27.1	17.1
13	I find it easy to make conversation with mates.	58.6	35.7	5.7
14	I don't feel nervous when I have to express ideas to others.	50.0	32.9	17.1
15	I don't think my friends are honest in their communication with me.	14.3	48.6	37.1
16	My friends don't listen to my ideas and suggestions in classroom discussions.	1.4	40.0	58.6
17	I don't ask for advice from friends when I have to make decisions.	8.6	32.9	58.6
18	I believe my friends understand my feelings.	38.6	57.1	4.3
19	My friends don't enjoy discussing my interests and activities with me.	5.7	42.9	51.4
20	My friends listen to my ideas and suggestions.	65.7	31.4	2.9
21	My friends seek my opinions and advice.	51.4	42.9	5.7
22	My friends are friendly to maintain communication because they want something out of me.	14.3	35.7	50.0
23	Talking to friends is just a waste of time.	8.6	8.6	82.9

24	My friends just pretend to be listening when I talk.	11.4	41.1	47.1
25	If I got into some kind of trouble, I couldn't talk to anyone about it.	18.6	45.7	35.7

Frequency of Responses to FL/L2 UTC Scale

The research question was raised by examining the factors influencing the reluctance of EFL students to communicate and the most frequent response of students' reluctance to communicate in the classrooms in higher education in Indonesia is shown in Table 3. This table shows the proportion of participants who endorsed the three options on the Likert scale (agree, uncertain, and disagree). As shown in Table 3, the majority of participants expressed their responses "disagree" on the statement *Talking to friends is just a waste of time* (Item 23, 82.9%). Followed responses "disagree" on the statement *I don't talk in classroom presentation because I'm shy* (Item 2, 65.7%) and response "disagree" on the statement *I don't like to get involved in group discussions* (Item 4, 65.7%).

The detail percentages of students' perception on factors affecting students' unwillingness to communicate (UTC) in EFL classroom are illustrated in Table 3. The highest response for item 1 (I'm afraid to speak up in classroom discussions) was disagree with 55.7%. The highest response for item 2 (I don't talk in classroom presentation because I'm shy) was disagree with 65.7%. The highest response for item 3 (I talk a lot because I am not shy) was uncertain with 52.9%. The highest response for item 4 (I don't like to get involved in group discussions) was disagree with 65.7%. The highest response for item 5 (In group discussions, I prefer to listen rather than talk) was uncertain with 45.7%. The highest response for item 6 (I feel nervous when I have to express ideas to others) was disagree with 38.6%. The highest response for item 7 (I have some fears about expressing myself in a group) was disagree with 40.0%. The highest response for item 8 (I am afraid to express myself in a group) was disagree with 55.7%. The highest response for item 9 (I like group discussions) was agree with 65.7%. The highest response for item 10 (I like group discussions) was uncertain with 54.3%. The highest response for item 11 (I find it difficult to make conversation with my mates) was disagree with 55.7%. The highest response for item 12 (I am not afraid to talk in a classroom discussion) was agree with 55.7%. The highest response for item 13 (I find it easy to make conversation with mates) was agree with 58.6%. The highest response for item 14 (I don't feel nervous when I have express ideas to others) was agree with 50.0%. The highest response for item 15 (I don't think my friends are honest in their communication with me) was uncertain with 48.6%. The highest response for item 16 (My friends don't listen to my ideas and suggestions in classroom discussions) was disagree with 58.6%. The highest response for item 17 (I don't ask for advice from friends when I have to make decisions) was disagree with 58.6%. The highest response for item 18 (I believe my friends understand my feelings) was uncertain with 57.1%. The highest response for item 19 (My friends don't enjoy discussing my interests and activities with me) was disagree with 51.4%. The highest response for item 20 (My friends listen to my ideas and suggestions) was agree with 65.7%. The highest response for item 21 (My friends seek my opinions and advice) was disagree with 51.4%. The highest response for item 22 (My friends are friendly only because they want something out of me) was disagree with 50.0%. The highest response for item 23 (Talking to friends is just a waste of time) was disagree with 82.9%. The highest response for item 24 (My friends just pretend to be listening when I talk) was disagree with 47.1%. The highest response for item 25 (If I got into some kind of trouble, I couldn't talk to anyone about it) was uncertain with 45.7%.

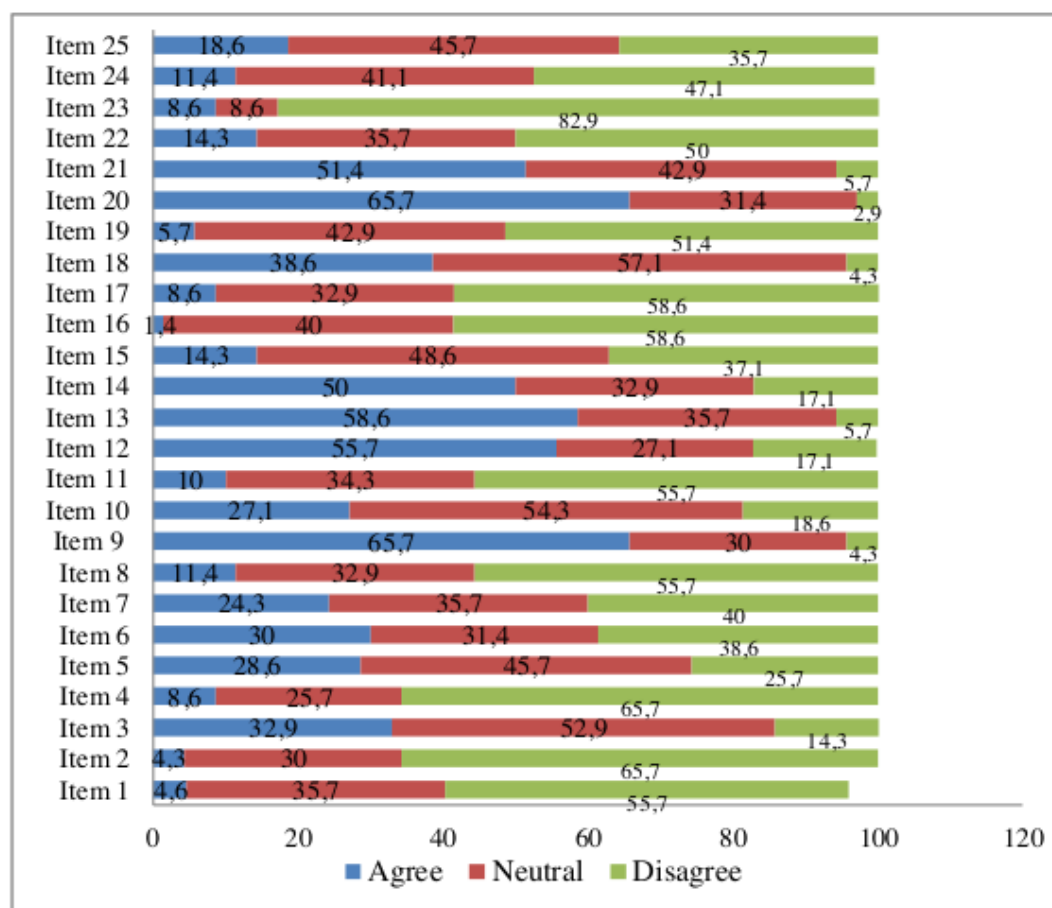


Figure 3. Proportion of Students' responses on factors affecting students' UTC

The proportion of students' responses on factors affecting students' unwillingness to communicate (UTC) in EFL classroom is displayed in Figure 3. The highest response for item 1 (I'm afraid to speak up in classroom discussions) was disagree with 55.7%. This implies that the students are not afraid to speak up in the classroom discussion. The highest response for item 2 (I don't talk in classroom presentation because I'm shy) was disagree with 65.7%. This means that the students disagree to the statement. Probably, the students are enthusiastic to talk in the classroom presentation because they are not shy.

The highest response for item 3 (I talk a lot because I am not shy) was uncertain with 52.9%. The highest response for item 4 (I don't like to get involved in group discussions) was disagree with 65.7%. This means that the students like to be involved and participated in the group discussion. The highest response for item 5 (In group discussions, I prefer to listen rather than talk) was uncertain with 45.7%. The highest response for item 6 (I feel nervous when I have to express ideas to others) was disagree with 38.6%. This illustrates that the students do not feel nervous when expressing their ideas to others in EFL classroom. The highest response for item 7 (I have some fears about expressing myself in a group discussion) was disagree with 40.0%. This means that the students do not have some fears about expressing themselves in a group discussion in EFL classroom. The highest response for item 8 (I am afraid to express myself in a group) was disagree with 55.7%. This statement reveals that the students are not afraid to express themselves in a group. The highest response for item 9 (I like group discussions) was agree with 65.7%. The highest response for item 10 (During a group discussion, I prefer to talk rather than listen) was uncertain with 54.3%. The highest response for item 11 (I find it difficult to make

conversation with my mates) was disagree with 55.7%. This illustrates that the students find it easy to make conversation with their mates.

The highest response for item 12 (I am not afraid to talk in a classroom discussion) was agree with 55.7%. The highest response for item 13 (I find it easy to make conversation with mates) was agree with 58.6%. The highest response for item 14 (I don't feel nervous when I have to express ideas to others) was agree with 50.0%. The highest response for item 15 (I don't think my friends are honest in their communication with me) was uncertain with 48.6%. The highest response for item 16 (My friends don't listen to my ideas and suggestions in classroom discussions) was disagree with 58.6%. The highest response for item 17 (I don't ask for advice from friends when I have to make decisions) was disagree with 58.6%. The highest response for item 18 (I believe my friends understand my feelings) was uncertain with 57.1%. The highest response for item 19 (My friends don't enjoy discussing my interests and activities with me) was disagree with 51.4%. The highest response for item 20 (My friends listen to my ideas and suggestions) was agree with 65.7%. The highest response for item 21 (My friends seek my opinions and advice) was disagree with 51.4%. The highest response for item 22 (My friends are friendly only because they want something out of me) was disagree with 50.0%. The highest response for item 23 (Talking to friends is just a waste of time) was disagree with 82.9%. The highest response for item 24 (My friends just pretend to be listening when I talk) was disagree with 47.1%. The highest response for item 25 (If I got into some kind of trouble, I couldn't talk to anyone about it) was uncertain with 45.7%.

Conclusion

Several conclusions about the students' unwillingness to communicate (UTC) in the Indonesian EFL classroom at higher **13** titution is clearly presented as follows.

First, the data analysis showed that **most of the students** were **willing to participate in EFL group** discussions. The students were not afraid to talk in a classroom discussion, they found it easy to make conversation with their mates in EFL classroom, and they disagreed that talking to friends was just a waste of time. This means that maintaining communication to other friends in EFL classroom can give beneficial contribution to enhance students' willingness to communicate. However, the students were unwillingness to express ideas to other students because they felt nervous, and they also were unwillingness to express themselves because they had some fears.

Acknowled⁹ment

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Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sukardi Weda, S.S., M.Hum., M.Pd., M.Si., M.M., M.Sos.I., M.A.P.
English Department
Universitas Negeri Makassar
Jl. Dg. Tata, Kampus UNM Parangtambung Makassar
Indonesia
sukardi.weda@unm.ac.id

Andi Elsa Fadhilah Sakti, S.S.
English Department
Universitas Negeri Makassar
Jl. Dg. Tata, Kampus UNM Parangtambung Makassar
Indonesia
andielsafadhilahs@yahoo.co.id

Andi Riola I²³nrigading
Psychology Department
Universitas Negeri Makassar
Jl. Perintis Kemerdekaan Makassar,
Indonesia
andiriolapasenrigading354@gmail.com

Name :
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Questionnaire
(Adapted from Burgoon, 1976)

1
Below is a series of statements concerning your perception on Unwillingness to Communicate. There are no right or wrong answers. Please write the number which corresponds to your answer into the space provided at the end of each sentence.

- 1 = agree
2 = uncertain
3 = disagree

Please put the number corresponding to your answers in the blank before the statement.

- 19**
..... I'm afraid to speak up in classroom discussions. **16**
..... I don't talk in classroom presentation because I'm shy.
..... I talk a **4** because I am not shy.
..... I don't like to get involved in group discussions.
..... In group discussions, I prefer to listen rather than talk.
..... I feel nervous when I have to express ideas to others.
..... I have some fears about expressing myself in a group discussion.
..... I am afraid to express myself in a group.
..... I like group discussions.
..... During a group discussion, I prefer to talk rather than listen.
..... I find it difficult to make conversation with my mates.
..... I am not afraid to talk in a classroom discussion.
..... I find it easy to make conversation with mates.
..... I don't feel nervous when I have express ideas to others.
..... I don't think my friends are honest in their communication with me.
..... My friends don't listen to my ideas and suggestions in classroom discussions.
..... I don't ask for advice from friends when I have to make decisions.
..... I believe my friends understand my feelings.
..... My friends don't enjoy discussing my interests and activities with me.
..... My friends listen to my ideas and suggestions.
..... My friends seek my opinions and advice.
..... My friends are friendly to maintain communication only because they want something out of me.
..... Talking to friends is just a waste of time.
..... My friends just pretend to be listening when I talk.
..... If I got into some kind of trouble, I couldn't talk to anyone about it.

An exploration of Indonesian EFL learners' unwillingness to communicate

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